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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000239

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/WE: LEVIN; DRL/IRF: HUSER; AF/SPG: SMALL AND
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SUBJECT: VATICAN SEES PROGRESS IN SUDAN, PRESSES FOR
DIALOGUE

REF: VATICAN 5669

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

VATICAN SEES PROGRESS

1. (C) HOLY SEE COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR SUDAN LUCIO SEMBRANO TOLD US JANUARY 15 THAT HE HAD RECENTLY SEEN PROGRESS IN "SMALL STEPS" IN SUDAN. HE NOTED THAT THE GOS HAD BEGUN TO ISSUE A FEW MORE VISAS TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES FROM ABROAD, AND HAD RECENTLY APPROVED PERMITS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CHURCHES IN KHARTOUM. SEMBRANO IMPRESSED UPON US THE IMPORTANCE THE HOLY SEE PLACED ON THIS LATTER DEVELOPMENT, AS MANY OF THE TWO MILLION CHRISTIANS NOW IN KHARTOUM HAD NO PROPER PLACE TO WORSHIP (REFTEL). ANOTHER SMALL SIGN OF PROGRESS: FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE GOS RESPONDED TO AN ANNUAL MESSAGE OF BROTHERHOOD ON THE OCCASION OF THE END OF RAMADAN SENT BY ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL FITZGERALD, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, WITH A SIMILAR MESSAGE OF ITS OWN.

ENCOURAGING GOS TO WORK WITH BISHOPS, WAKO

2. (C) REFTEL NOTED THE HOLY SEE'S ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SUDANESE BISHOPS TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH MUSLIMS AND OTHERS IN SUDAN. SEMBRANO TOLD US THE HOLY SEE HAD RECENTLY WORKED THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EQUATION AS WELL, ENCOURAGING THE SUDANESE AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE TO ASK KHARTOUM TO CONSULT MORE WITH THE SUDANESE BISHOPS. OFTEN, SEMBRANO CLAIMED, THE GOS COMMUNICATED WITH THEM, BUT ONLY AFTER SOME DECISION HAD BEEN MADE. SEMBRANO SAID THAT THE NEW SUDANESE CARDINAL, GABRIEL ZUBEIR WAKO, WAS READY TO WORK WITH THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT AND SUDANESE MUSLIMS IN GENERAL, DESPITE PAST MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE VALUE OF SUCH EFFORTS. "IF (KHARTOUM) REACHES OUT, CARDINAL WAKO IS NOW READY FOR A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST," SEMBRANO SAID.

SUPPORT FOR DANFORTH MISSION

3. (U) THE HOLY SEE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE WAY FORWARD IN SUDAN IN LIGHT OF RECENT PROGRESS IN THE PEACE TALKS, AND WELCOMED THE WORK OF SPECIAL ENVOY DANFORTH TO HELP CONCLUDE A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE DEAL. IN OUR LAST MEETING (REFTEL) SEMBRANO HAD BEEN SIMILARLY POSITIVE ABOUT U.S. EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACE IN SUDAN.

NICHOLSON

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